

Letter to Aunt Ofelia:



Seven Proposals for Human Development Using New Information and Communication Technologies

Ricardo Gómez
Benjamín Casadiego

Based on the results of a collective workshop



PAN Américas



**Letter to Aunt Ofelia:
Seven Proposals for Human Development Using
New Information and Communication Technologies**

©Ricardo Gómez and Benjamín Casadiego

*First edition
August 2002
22 pages; 28 X 22 cm*

ISBN:

Illustrations: ©William Meneses
Designer: Rodolfo Valenzuela

About authors: Ricardo Gómez is coordinator of the PAN
Americas Program, International Development Research
Centre, IDRC, Canada. [Www.idrc.ca/pan](http://www.idrc.ca/pan)
Benjamín Casadiego is Director of Fundación Raíces
Mágicas, Colombia. mincho@soon.com

This publication is produced with the support of the
International Development Research Centre IDRC,
Canada, www.idrc.ca



Full text available online at www.idrc.ca/pan
Original en **Español**
Aussi en **Français**

Abstract

These seven proposals are intended as a contribution to the ongoing debate over the use of new technologies for human development, which is understood here to mean promoting democracy with social justice, economic prosperity with equity, and realization of the full human potential. These proposals are the result of a workshop involving three-dozen specialists in this area who met in Cajamarca, Peru in March 2002.

The proposals may be summarized as follows:

1. Offer concrete solutions
2. Move forward at the pace of the community
3. Learn from mistakes
4. Localize globalized communication
5. Work with a gender perspective
6. Let people speak with their own voice
7. Generate new knowledge

The paper has been drafted in the form of a letter to an imaginary aunt who has recently been appointed Secretary of Communications in a Latin American country. This device allows for a creative approach to discussing issues and proposals for taking better advantage of the opportunities offered by information and communication technologies (ICTs) for human development in the region.

Letter to Aunt Ofelia:

*Seven Proposals
for Human
Development
Using New
Information and
Communication
Technologies*

Dear Aunt Ofelia:

You asked me a few days ago what you could do to ensure that in your new post as Secretary of Communications you could make a real contribution to human development in our country. How can Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), or more precisely the Internet, be made to serve people in their everyday lives? What is behind this tremendous euphoria that we hear so much of today with respect to the benefits that the Internet can bring to democracy, education, health, commerce and citizen participation? Are there some hidden risks behind the changes that the Internet is making in our societies, given the great degree of social, economic and political inequality? In the end we ask ourselves, from a human development perspective, what is the usefulness of the Internet?

I recognize that you want to understand these subjects more thoroughly. You said that you would like to be able to explain the issue to other people, using concrete examples that will illustrate the positive and negative aspects of ICTs, and that you needed a clearer picture of the policies and guidelines that would be best suited to ensuring that ICTs will produce positive benefits for our people by providing concrete solutions to their real problems. We agree that we should not be promoting the massive use of technologies in ways that will merely serve to maintain or exacerbate existing social and economic inequities. Quite simply, ICTs could be no more than a new form of entertainment and consumption that will benefit only a few, those who need it least because they already have so much. The challenge is daunting: we need to overcome social inequalities, and not just adapt to them by installing machines.

A few days after your appointment as Secretary of Communications, and shortly after our conversation, I was given an opportunity to draw upon some new sources of inspiration in attempting to answer your questions. We recently met in Cajamarca, Peru, with a group of about three-dozen experts in this field. The group included people from various countries working on projects and activities of many kinds related to ICTs and human development. The makeup of the group was in fact quite varied: it included representatives

**In the end we
ask ourselves,
from a human
development
perspective,
what is the
usefulness of
the Internet?**



of government programs, private business and civil society organizations, and their differing viewpoints contributed greatly to enriching the discussion. I told the group about your appointment and your questions, and the task you are facing in formulating national policies for telecommunications and development. I could not help saying that I consider you a very special woman, genuine, intelligent, and one who has taken the lead in major education projects in our country. I had to confess that you do not know very much about technology, but that on the other hand you are a very good listener. I concluded by saying that your appointment as Secretary of Communications is no accident: indeed, I believe it reflects recognition of your long and dedicated work on behalf of the poorest people in our country.

Thanks to those three days of talking and exchanging experiences in Cajamarca, we now have some much clearer ideas to share with you. The outcome of that discussion, which is the core of this letter, amounts to seven proposals for equitable development using ICTs. Before going into them, however, I want to copy for you something that one of the participants, Yacine, wrote down as a topic for discussion, something that will help to set the general tone for the subject:

"We are tired of the so-called 'digital divide' problem. The real problem is how we are going to use the strategic opportunities that ICTs offer for closing social divides, and how we are going to make sure that initiatives of the 'digital divide' kind do not further deepen the existing social divide. This is not a semantic problem, but a vision that embraces all our objectives, methods and efforts for using ICTs to the benefit of sustainable human development."

I am now going to review the proposals for you, one by one, illustrated with the drawings of my cousin William.

1. Offer concrete solutions

The most serious problem facing us when it comes to programs involving ICTs and development is that they are too often unrelated to what is really going on and to what people in the real world actually need. It is almost as if the people who develop these programs were hypnotized by ICTs and the Internet, and were concerned only with connectivity and hardware, instead of focusing on finding solutions to people's real problems. As if the lack of democracy could be overcome by having people use a voting machine instead of filling out a paper ballot!

At times it seems that the designers of ICTs and development programs believe that marketing and distribution problems with agricultural products can be solved by posting wholesale market prices online, or that education problems can be overcome by simply putting computers in the classroom. It is as if they failed to recognize that people also need roads, credit, technical assistance, inputs and buyers for the oranges, corn or potatoes that they work so hard to produce, or as if they had forgotten that we also need qualified teachers, appropriate curricula, teaching materials, textbooks, ideas and resources so that education programs can fulfill their mission of educating people for a meaningful life.

National connectivity plans, in fact, do not seem to give very much thought to what this connectivity is supposed to do for us. What we want you to keep in mind at all times, Aunt Ofelia, is that connectivity is not an end in itself, but a tool that can help find concrete solutions to people's problems and needs. In the end, what is important is not connectivity but the way it is used. Connectivity is not worth much if it means that we simply continue doing the same old things, or worse, but are now connected while we do it. Just look at what has happened in Argentina. They raced to set up a whole series of Community Technology Centres - and I say raced, because it was like the 100 meter sprint just before the elections - and so they ended up with 1,500 centres equipped, connected and inaugurated that they did not know what to do with, and that were virtually no use to anyone. Of course this has all been overtaken by the crisis that they now have in Argentina, but it is really sad that they spent so much money without thinking first about some simple things that would make the centres work better, or about what people really needed and how ICTs could help them meet their needs.

Connectivity is not an end in itself, but a tool that can help find concrete solutions to people's problems and needs.



Yet there are some fine examples that we can cite from other places where they started small, involved local people from the outset, worked with local organizations that were already doing things for the community, and took a step-by-step approach to launching their projects. There is a small, war-torn town in Colombia where the community radio station purchased its first computer with the proceeds from running raffles and broadcasting birthday greetings. Today it is part of a national community radio network that is working for peace, communicating by Internet with other stations, and with many people in other countries, exchanging scripts and news and even trading recorded programs when the connection is working properly. They were allowed to run the public Internet access booth when the concessionaire appointed by the government could no longer do so, and things began to get even better. Today people feel completely at home with the Internet, thanks to this community radio station, and more and more people are learning how to use e-mail, chat rooms and the Web, because they realize that these can help them in their daily lives. What they need now is to achieve better connections, so that they can access the Web more quickly, perhaps by cable or satellite, and thereby avoid having to use the telephone lines, which are very expensive and of poor quality.

The point we are making here is that using ICTs for development is not a question of technology and hardware but of relationships between people. It is not enough to provide access to the technology, however important good access at a reasonable price may be, what we need to do is to strengthen people's abilities to use that technology to the full. More important yet, they must be able to appropriate technologies and turn them into tools that will help them find solutions to concrete problems. Otherwise, providing connectivity through ICTs will merely provide us with a mirage, a maze of games where we can tune out from reality and forget about the world. This may seem like an exaggeration, but you can see it for yourself in the Internet cafes, the successors to the videogame arcades, where people mostly pay for connectivity just to kill time. That is not bad in itself, but it has nothing to do with programs to foster human development.

2.

Move forward at the pace of the community

Development projects take time, and they generally work better when done in a manner consistent with the timing and pace of the communities involved.

A microwave oven heats things fast, but who would ever think of trying to cook a good old-fashioned stew in one? It takes time to cook a tasty dish. The same goes for development projects. The profound changes that are really needed to strengthen democracy, to enhance prosperity with equity for all, and to realize the full human potential are not things that can be achieved overnight, or even from one year to the next. The fact is that the people who finance and promote these programs often expect to see results that they can use quickly, whether to win elections, to please the donor or to fulfill their own goals and programs. We know that the fine announcements that politicians and financial institutions like to make often have little meat or substance: they are cooked up in a microwave oven. When the moment is past, we realize that their recipes are pretty bland and insipid.

Development projects take time, and they generally work better when done in a manner consistent with the timing and pace of the communities involved. That pace will generally be slow: the project planning horizon will have to extend over more than one or two years and it will be more complex than can be described in a catchy slogan.

The problem is not just one of time but also of rationale or approach. What the promoters tell us is increasingly superficial, and amounts to merely scratching the surface without considering in depth the way people think, their needs, their process of change. This problem is perhaps made even worse by the Internet itself, although it can speed up time and shorten distances, a day still has only 24 hours! At times it seems as if we were caught in a downward spiral towards "profound superficiality": hopping around the Web, surfing from link to link as a substitute for reading, PowerPoint presentations and quick one-liners as a surrogate for writing. Conversation is replaced by "chat", and correspondence by instant e-mail, which is necessarily superficial and telegraphic because there are a hundred other messages awaiting response. I ask myself, is this really communication? Letters like this one, Aunt Ofelia, carefully thought out and composed, are becoming pretty rare...



What suffers from all this is not only communication but the quality of the development process. We do not do what is really important but what is easy and quick to administer and measure, and what can be used as an "announceable", an excuse for a media event or a flashy unveiling. Everything is done in a rush, and when it is all over we are left with nothing but empty peanut shells and a hangover.

Aunt Ofelia, the best results of sound ICTs development policies and programs will only come to light long after your stint at the Ministry of Communications. Your real success will not be measured by the number of classrooms equipped with computers or the number of schools wired to the Internet during your term. The most valuable and lasting results will only be apparent later, downstream: when the boys and girls now in our rural schools become adults and find that their lives are improved through the new opportunities for personal fulfillment that ICTs offer them, when their economic situation is better and they are empowered as citizens through the appropriation of ICTs. Far from discouraging you, I am sure that you will find this challenge all the more interesting.

To heat up a bowl of rice takes two minutes in a microwave. But to prepare your favourite stew you need to get out your pots and pans, your herbs and spices, use fresh ingredients, a proper oven and a lot of preparation time and conversation (the best conversations happen in the kitchen!). We should not pretend that projects for ICTs and development can keep to the tight timetables of agencies or officials, or that they will produce instant results that can be worked into fancy speeches at unveiling ceremonies. Real change is not compatible with "profound superficiality".

Learn from mistakes

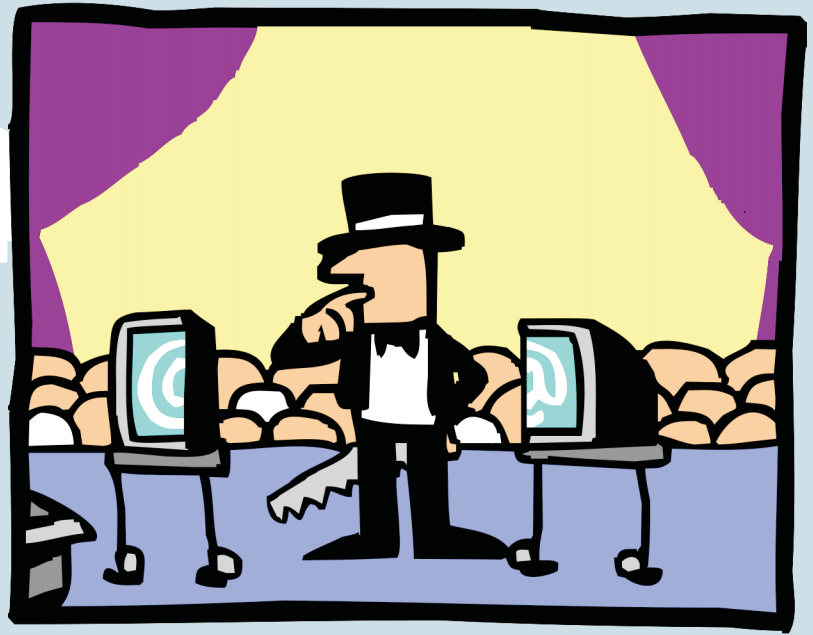
You have to be creative with mistakes! The problem is not that we make mistakes, but that we fail to learn from them and so we repeat them. Yet it is hard to know when we are making mistakes. No one likes to admit that things have not turned out as expected, particularly when we have a feeling that our reputation, our job or the financing of our project depends on the outcome. But just as it is important to learn to talk about mistakes, it is also important to spread the news when there are success stories to be told! This is what our friends in Nicaragua call "cacarear el huevo". If ICT projects are to contribute human development, it is really important that we learn from both our successes and from our mistakes, learn to do things better, learn to *be* better.

Many people feel threatened when we talk about evaluation, as if it were some kind of audit to see whom the problems should be blamed on. Although audits are important for ensuring accountability and verifying procedures, evaluating outcomes and results is quite a different thing. While monitoring we try to learn from what we are doing right and wrong, to improve things as we go along, and to share what we have learned in the process. In evaluation we learn about the outcomes, the results of an activity or set of activities, trying to include a variety of perspectives. To pretend that an audit results in learning is a serious error.

Development projects are not a new issue, and neither is communication for development. We have learned much in both fields over the last half-century, and Latin America has made significant contributions to them, both in theory and in practice. What is new, however, is this phenomenon of convergence of different technologies - telecommunications, computers and multimedia - with the emergence of the Internet and its various associated tools. Even newer is to use all this to promote human development. This field of ICTs and development is not even ten years old - that is not very long!

We have found that it is usually very hard to evaluate the positive and negative results and the real impact that ICTs have on human development. There are many anecdotes, of course, and much euphoria. But it is only very recently that Latin America has seen real, systematic efforts to evaluate and learn from what we are doing and to appreciate the impact that these programs are having. Not only are you going to have a tough time determining which activity or program is producing a given result within the community, you will also have trouble making sure that the effects or results of the project, positive or negative, can be seen or detected at a given moment in time, and not years

It is usually very hard to evaluate the positive and negative results and the real impact that ICTs have on human development.



later. Moreover you will always have to be alert to surprises, to unexpected outcomes, which are frequently the most revealing ones.

For example, one project began with a very attractive policy announcement - the Internet would offer new opportunities for street kids. What politicians at the time wanted to announce was a program to provide computers for street kids so that they could surf the Web and seek information on rehabilitation programs that they could turn to. Yet as it turned out the program was aimed instead at offering training in computer and Internet use as part of the care and rehabilitation program. Participants began to discover a much bigger and more diverse world than they had ever imagined, thanks to the Internet. They found opportunities that helped increase their desire to learn and their ability to feel that they were an active part of a much broader society. In some cases they found better jobs or improved their school performance, but the most important impact was their increased self-esteem. This is an indirect effect that is difficult to measure, but it points to something very powerful over the long run: internal transformation. The systematic and in-depth evaluation of indirect results of this kind is one of the most serious challenges facing projects for ICTs and development.

To put it another way, the problem with evaluating ICTs and development projects is not only that it confuses auditing with learning, or that it is a relatively new field where evaluation tools and methodologies are just being invented. The most serious problem is that evaluations are frequently limited to collecting success stories, photographs and testimonials, consistent with the "profound superficiality" approach, and that they fail to look more deeply into the changing relationships, the problems, the unanswered questions, the intangible results. That, dear Aunt Ofelia, is an extremely important issue.

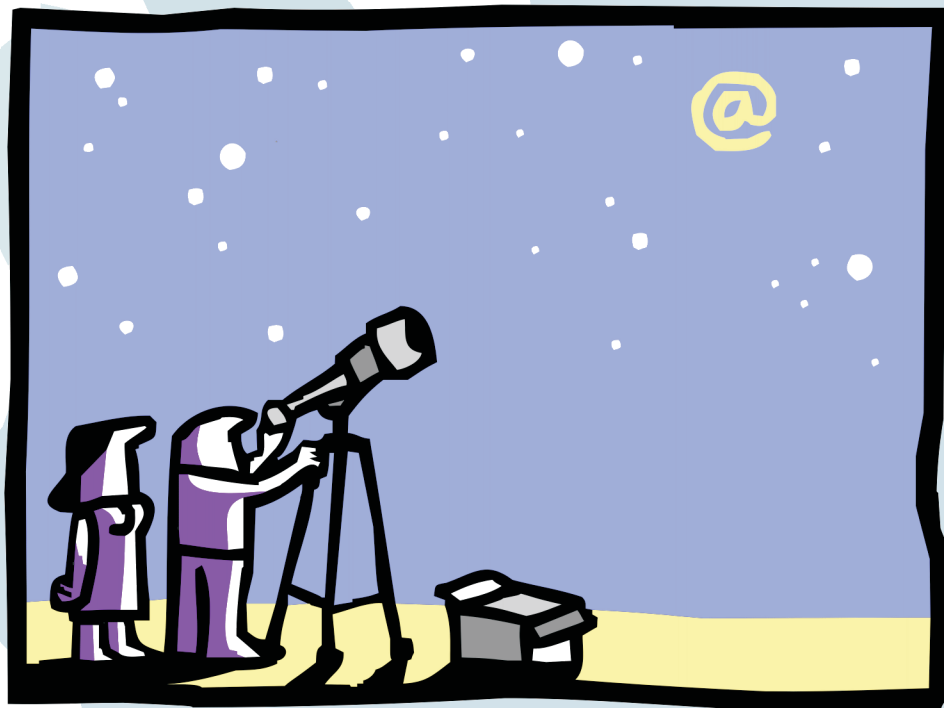
Localize globalized communication

ICTs and development projects must be firmly rooted in people's local reality, their organizations, their customs and their culture.

A person waking up today from a hundred years' sleep would get quite a fright. Many things would have changed, but I think the most shocking impression would be that the world has become much smaller. Not only can we travel around the globe in much less than 80 days, but money and information can do so in seconds. Markets, wars and products are all becoming globalized, as are environmental impacts and the circulation of ideas. Yet the great majority of people still feel that their lives are circumscribed by their immediate surroundings and their local reality. ICTs make it increasingly easy to be in contact with the rest of the world, but this only has meaning for human development if it can be converted into concrete results in people's immediate living space.

Resolving this tension between the global and the local requires a creative approach to projects for ICTs and development. Where is the balance between the capacity to exchange information with people in the rest of the world and the possibility to transform our immediate living conditions? We know of many people and organizations who are thoroughly plugged into the virtual world but who do not know their neighbours and take no part in working with similar organizations in the same city. We also know of many organizations and individuals who are striving to solve local problems that appear terribly complicated, and who waste a great deal of time before they discover that there are simple solutions or helpful contributions to be found in other parts of the country or the region.

The most important lesson we have learned, and one that we want to share with you, is that ICTs and development projects must be firmly rooted in people's local reality, their organizations, their customs and their culture. You can hire the best-known international experts to design pretty projects, but they will not get very far unless they start with what is important to people and unless they build on what is already happening in the community. Only if you can get the community to participate in designing the projects, and can ensure that activities serve to strengthen what the community is already doing and what it considers important for



its own development, only then you will be sowing on fertile ground.

We spoke earlier of how projects have to adapt to people's pace, rather than expect that people will adapt to administrative or political schedules for projects. Let us take this point even further to say that it is usually best to support and build upon what already exists instead of trying to start from scratch. ICTs are not an end in themselves, and it is hopeless to think that ICT projects can be successful if they are divorced from their local setting.

In many projects there is a temptation to ignore or tear everything else up and start from zero, and to try to impose a predefined solution on the community. An extreme case of this is the so-called "intelligent containers" recently deployed in a number of locations, a container full of computer equipment and other devices that is dumped on the community in the hope that it will solve development problems. This kind of initiative would be much more useful if it were done in concert with an existing, recognized organization in the community. That might be a community radio station, a cultural centre, a public library or school, organizations that already exist as part of the community and are providing a useful service, places where people gather, experiences where ICTs can add an interesting dimension in terms of new working tools.

If they are solidly anchored in local social practices, ICTs can help to open doors and windows for participation in the global universe of ideas, experiences and values, so that globalization can cease to be a threat and constitute a new value that is full of opportunities.

5.

Work with a gender perspective

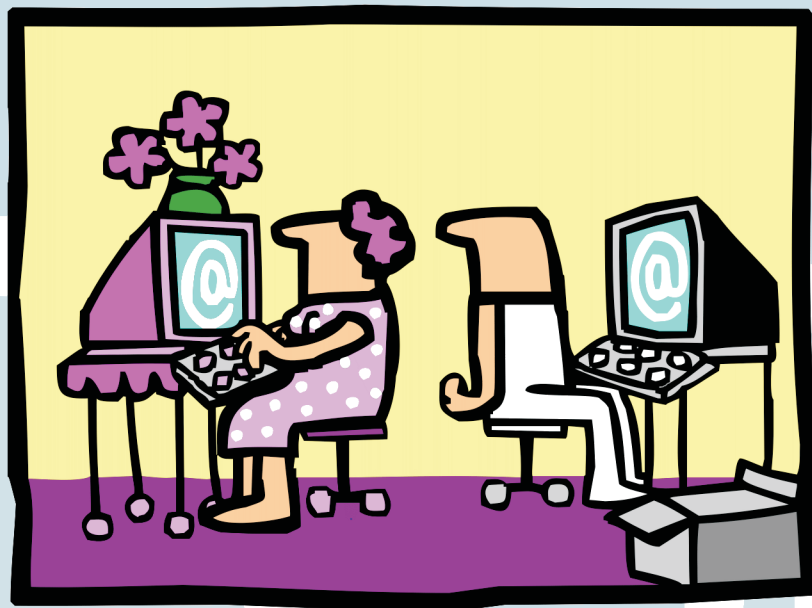
Working with a gender perspective means taking account of the differences that exist in our society in the relationships between men and women.

I try to imagine how many times you have been treated differently and discriminated because you are a woman! I'll bet that even in your new job as Secretary of Communications, you are finding that people do not treat your views and experience as they would those of a man in the same job. In our societies the relationships between men and women are nearly always inequitable, with more privileges, opportunities and recognition for him than for her.

In projects involving ICTs and development, these differences between men and women have very significant repercussions, because each group has different needs and abilities. Furthermore, additional inequities result from many other differences based on skin colour, religion, language, income level, place of residence. Things are very different for an educated, cosmopolitan woman like you than for a poor woman like Doris who does your housecleaning, or her sisters who are still living in poverty in the countryside. Imagine if Doris and her family were not only poor but black or Indian, or if they spoke another language such as Quechua or Quiché, think of the additional barriers that they would face in trying to access and make real use of the Internet in the way your daughter does!

Working with a gender perspective means taking account of the differences that exist in our society in the relationships between men and women (and more broadly, other kinds of inequities based on language, religion, ethnic background or social class), to ensure that all individuals will have the same opportunities. But the gender perspective also implies undertaking specific actions to help women, and in general all those who are on the weaker side of the power relationship, so that they can overcome barriers and appropriate technological tools in ways that will help them solve their problems and meet their specific needs.

In other words, we cannot design programs targeted at "the general population", nor can we assess their results and their impact on



"the general population". Instead, we have to introduce specific mechanisms so that women's views and circumstances are part of the programs, and so that they can participate effectively in them. As well, it is urgent to identify the specific impacts that affect women, and determine whether or not the programs are serving to transform the inequitable relationships that now exist in our society on the basis of sex, class or race.

This is an issue that has been under discussion for some time, and something that the Beijing Summit helped to position more visibly. Yet, generally speaking, the approach to the gender perspective is still very superficial. International agencies often insist that there be some mention of gender as a condition for supporting projects, and so some mention of gender will be inserted, but there will usually be little follow-up. Evaluations are often limited, in terms of the gender perspective, to reporting how many women attend training courses or how many are using a telecentre, but they seldom go further to investigate more qualitative, in-depth aspects. This is another manifestation of "profound superficiality", where words are more important than substance or people.

Working from a gender perspective can be easier when women are taking the decisions, as you are now. In our work with telecentres, for example, we have found that women tend to run them better than men and they are more sensitive to the needs of other women who come for information or help. But you will surely agree that being a woman does not automatically mean having a gender equity perspective, just as being a man does not necessarily preclude having one. In the end, what matters is the relationship between men and women, and it takes both sides to improve that relationship.

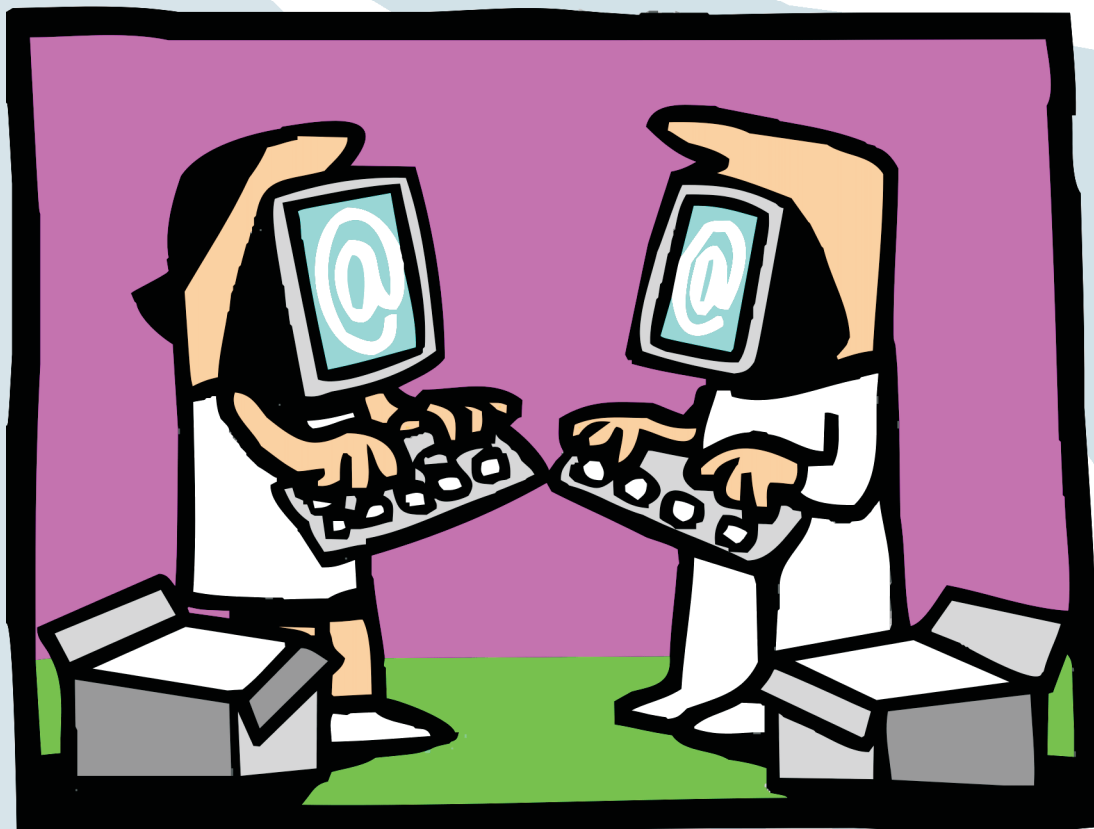
Let people speak with their own voice

**What is
important is to
learn to
communicate
the way people
communicate.**

I once asked a group of indigenous women in Guatemala what kinds of information were missing on the Internet. They had been working for several years within their communities using different communication tools, and after a few training workshops they were quite familiar with the Internet. Their response was almost unanimous: "What is missing is information about our own communities." The Web has tons of information on many things, but what we usually find is information prepared from the viewpoint of power holders, the north, white people; the most common information is about entertainment and consumption, but this is seldom of much use for those of us who are working for human development. And the little information that we do find (I say little in comparison with what is available on all the other issues) is usually written in a way that is difficult to understand or use for the people to whom it is supposedly directed.

One serious problem is that most of the information on the Internet is in written form, and there are many people who, even if they have access to the network, cannot read or cannot do so sufficiently well to make use of it. Then there is the problem of language: nearly everything is in English. As if that were not enough, the contents are presented in ways that are not easy to understand or use, or that have nothing to do with local needs and contexts, which are the most important considerations for getting development projects underway. We have already spoken about pace and timing, and about the local versus the global. What I want to stress here is that the contents must be relevant and appropriate to the human development effort. And not only the contents but their form as well.

The information available over the Internet often has to be translated if it is to be useful for the people in a community. And this translation has to do not only with switching from one



language to another, but with putting it in a form that people can understand. This sometimes means using other communication technologies such as radio, the press or television, but it also means using other forms of communication such as stories, theatre skits, songs, public meetings or training workshops. For example, community radio stations play a key role by taking information and converting it into broadcasts that are heard by far more people than the Internet can reach. Similarly, non-governmental organizations and civil society groups play a role as mediators, extending the reach and benefit of information far beyond the ranks of those who have direct access to computers and Internet connections.

In the end, what is important is to learn to communicate the way people communicate. This is much more difficult than it seems at first glance, because everyone thinks that the world understands or is interested in what they have to say. But this is not always the case. When it comes to ICTs and development, it is important that people in the communities that are supposed to benefit from the projects should be involved in defining the issues, the contents and formats, to ensure that these are in line with people's own needs, interests and ways of communicating. Finally, we must remember that the Internet does not stand alone, and the best thing is to combine it with other forms of communication in order to take maximum advantage of it.

7.

Generate new knowledges

ICTs can play an important role in human development, to the extent that they become tools for generating useful new knowledge and contributing To the transformation of our reality.

This is the last point of this letter, dear Aunt, but certainly not the least important. ICTs offer us an infinite realm of new information, more than you or I could ever hope to absorb in our lifetime. Yet ICTs do not provide us with knowledge. Knowledge is what we make ourselves, as human beings, and there is no machine or connection that can do it for us. Accumulating information is not the same thing as generating knowledge. On the contrary, being swamped with new information every minute is more likely to induce paralysis. ICTs give us so much information that we tend to lose sight of what is really important. And because the flow never stops, we lose the ability to think, to reflect, to chew over ideas and get to the bottom of them so we can really generate new knowledge. We are stuck in "profound superficiality", in the illusion that we have knowledge, but we are simply intoxicated by data overload.

ICTs open the door to new possibilities for working cooperatively without geographic borders, where numbers of people can exchange ideas without having to be in the same place. The occasional face-to-face get-together is certainly good, as we found at Cajamarca recently, because that kind of intimate discussion is still much more enriching. But distance work offers incredible opportunities for building new knowledge in a collective way.

Education is one of the fields where ICTs offer the greatest opportunities, in the sense that they can bring about a radical change in the way we understand the processes of learning and teaching. In no way does this mean simply doing the same things as before, but with machines. Nor does it mean replacing teachers with computer screens and software. The challenge here is to make education a real process of learning and interchange that will help shape citizens who are aware and capable of participating



actively in building their own future. ICTs can help in this process, but the solution is not as easy as putting a computer in every classroom and offering distance education programs over the Internet.

More than machines and connectivity, what we need is training to learn to use these technological resources effectively, to learn to swim in the sea of information without drowning, and to learn to appropriate what is useful for solving the concrete problems of the real world. ICTs can play an important role in human development, to the extent that they become tools for generating useful new knowledge and contributing to the transformation of our reality.

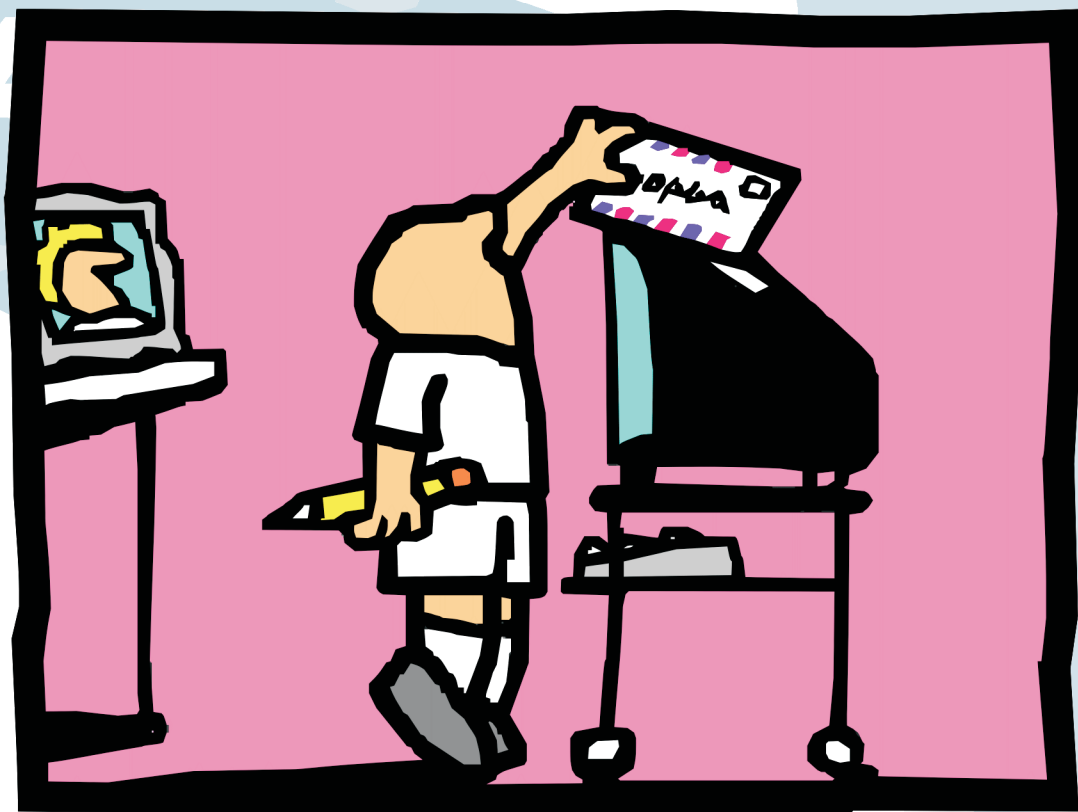
This may be the reason why so many people are questioning the wisdom of the next World Summit of the Information Society. The real contribution to development will come not from the capacity to process and accumulate information, but from generating new knowledge. And ICTs are only one part of this effort. To generate new knowledge we need people who have the ability and the time to think. And this, perhaps, is something that the information society is not very good at promoting.

Conclusion

There you have it, dear Aunt Ofelia. I will now wind up this letter, since it has become very long and you must have a lot of other things to read. Although you may not believe it, I tried to keep this letter as short as possible, but these ideas are very hard to convey by telegram or its present-day successor, PowerPoint. I hope that you will find them useful in coping with the many pressures that you will face from all sides now that you are embarked on the process of defining public policies for ICTs and human development.

There will be powerful political and economic interests lurking around every corner and trying to influence your decisions in one direction or another. What I have tried to do here is to share with you a perspective on the issue of ICTs and development that reflects what you could call the social interests in this field. In short, what I hope you will remember is that policies will be most conducive to human development if they are targeted at the following goals (I repeat the labels here to help you remember them):

- Offer concrete solutions
- Move forward at the pace of the community
- Learn from mistakes
- Localize globalized communication
- Work with a gender perspective
- Let people speak with their own voice
- Generate new knowledge



There are many other people in Latin America and the Caribbean who are working from this kind of social perspective on the use of ICTs. They will surely have a different focus or emphasis from what I have set down for you here, but from what I have heard, most will agree with the broader picture I am presenting. Nonetheless, I am sure that at some point you will want to know more about this issue and how other people in the region are handling it. I shall be very pleased to put you in contact with them, or I could send you some of their recent writings. Please let me know if you're interested.

I must leave you now, although I hate to abandon this dialogue. In order to keep it a dialogue and not a monologue, however, I had better stop here and await your response and your comments.

With warmest regards,

Your nephew,

Emilio

Letter to Aunt Ofelia:

Seven Proposals for Human Development Using New Information and Communication Technologies

©Ricardo Gómez and Benjamín Casadiego 2002

This paper is based on the results of the workshop Exchange of Experiences on Social Appropriation of New Information and Communication Technologies for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean organized by ITDG (www.itdg.org.pe), Cajamarca, Peru, in March 2002. Although many people participated in the discussions and commented early drafts of this document, the final responsibility for its content is of the authors.

Participants: Miguel Saravia, ITDG, Perú; ; Andrew Scott ITDG, Inglaterra; Michel J. Menou, London City University, Inglaterra; Giovanna Tipán, Fundación Chasquinet, Ecuador; José Ignacio López Silva, Red de Desarrollo Sostenible, Nicaragua; Irma Alicia Suárez, SICOM, México; Juan Fernando Bossio, ITDG, Perú; Scott Robinson, Universidad Metropolitana México, DF, USA; Yacine Khelladi, Kalalú Danza, República Dominicana; Patricio Dobree, Radio Trinidad, Asunción, Paraguay; Bruce Girard, COMUNICA, Holanda; Roxana Bassi, Secretaría de Comunicaciones, Argentina; Fermín Torrejón, Proyecto Purhuay, Perú; Lester Echevarría, Centros Electrónicos de Negocios, Guatemala; Maicu Alvarado, Centro peruano de estudios sociales, Perú; Wilder Alberto Walca, Proyecto Radiodifusoras Chilala, Perú; Cecilia Solís, ITDG, Perú; Aldo Pereyra, SIRU, Perú; Cecilia Fernández, Proyecto de Telefonía Rural ITDG, Perú; Benjamín Casadiego, Fundación Raíces Mágicas, Colombia; Dora Molina Galdámez, CONAMYPE, México; Doris Mejía, ITDG, Perú; Erick Aquino, Asesoría Cultural BBVA Trujillo, Perú; Horacio Gustavo Ruiz, Asociación de Mujeres Warmi Sayajsunqo, Argentina; Julie McCarthy, Proyecto ARTPAD, Inglaterra; Luis Cáceres, AEDES, Perú; Nair Carrasco, Red Peruana de Lactancia Materna, Perú; Patricia Díaz, FITELE, Perú; Pedro Vidarte, Proyecto de Alfabetización ITDG, Perú; Rafael Hernández, INFODEV, USA; Ricardo Gómez, Internacional Development Research Centre, Canadá; Rolando Pacheco, ITDG, Perú; Sandro Venturo, RCP, Perú; Tania Sánchez, Telecentro Infodes ITDG, Perú; Vilma Rocío Almendra Quiguanás, Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca, Colombia.



PAN Américas

PAN Americas supports research on the social uses and impact of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

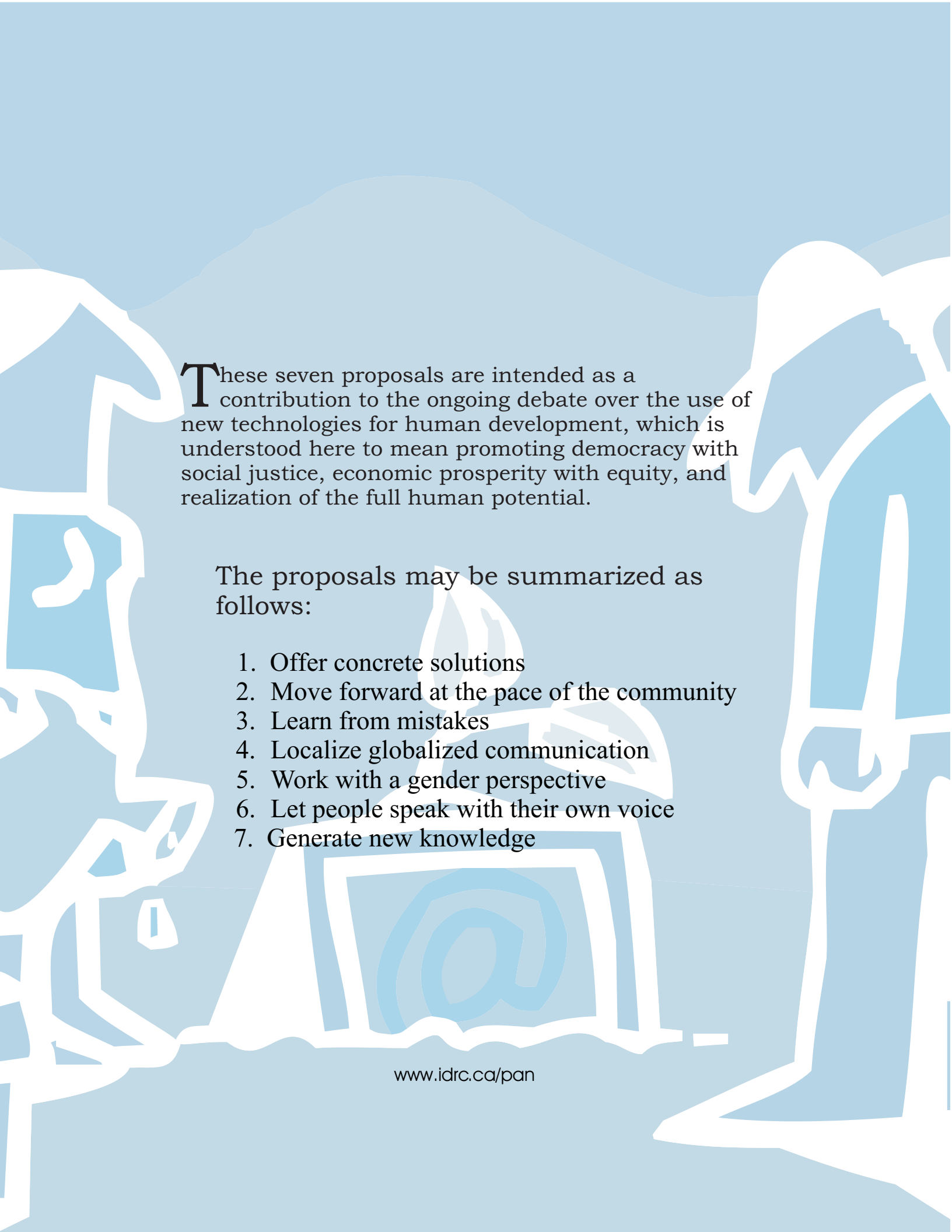


Fundación Raíces Mágicas does cultural studies in Ocaña, Colombia, and supports innovative education processes with the use of information and communication technologies in schools in Latin America and the Caribbean.



SOLUCIONES PRÁCTICAS
PARA LA POBREZA

ITDG is an international technical cooperation team that works with poor populations seeking practical solutions to poverty with the use of appropriate technologies.

The background features a stylized illustration in shades of blue and white. It depicts a mountain range in the distance and a person sitting on a rock in the foreground. The person is wearing a hat and a long coat, and is holding a book or a tablet. The overall style is minimalist and graphic.

These seven proposals are intended as a contribution to the ongoing debate over the use of new technologies for human development, which is understood here to mean promoting democracy with social justice, economic prosperity with equity, and realization of the full human potential.

The proposals may be summarized as follows:

1. Offer concrete solutions
2. Move forward at the pace of the community
3. Learn from mistakes
4. Localize globalized communication
5. Work with a gender perspective
6. Let people speak with their own voice
7. Generate new knowledge